



# SELL CONNECT

## Sharing Education & Learning for Life

*A Peacebuilding Programme for Young Adults*

*SELL- An Initiative of St. Patricks Missionary Society*



**December 2021**

### **Christmas greeting from Fr. Leo.**

I feel so grateful to be writing this Christmas note from within Malawi. I'm here at last after such a long wait. I pray we are getting out of this covid time, a time of fear and anxiety and for many of suffering and grief. The message is clear. We are all deeply interconnected with our natural world, when it is interfered with there are consequences. We must all choose going forward to stop this reckless pursuit of 'more'. Changing our course is no longer the work of politicians, governments, welfare groups, it's now the task of all humanity.

Jesus birth is a message of humility and simplicity God in the very manner of this child's birth is calling us to vulnerability and openness to each other. Never more do we need to heed this call than in our present time. There is still time to listen, to change, to as our SELL Programme motto says, 'Think and Choose'. Its now down to each one of us, let's stop the hoarding, the greed, the self-interest and Choose to be a different people. Choose love, relationships, community, simplicity of lifestyle, and respect for the Earth. Then there will be Peace on Earth and Good Will shared to everyone.

Christmas Blessings. Leo

### **A special word of thanks**

As this year's newsletter goes out, I had to ask for this little bit of space to add this note of Thanks. During my home time so many of you were so generous to me when I met you or we were in touch. Some of you contributed to the Ghana team as they try to build a base for the SELL work there. Others gave me a contribution to help me get set up here in Malawi and we have been able to give a little help to the Nigeria team also. Let me not forget those who have decided to sign up to the monthly direct debit – that contribution gives us such security in the work. All of you mean so much to us, all of you are prayed for each week by each team so thoughts and prayers flow your way from Nigeria, Ghana and Malawi. Thank you all so much. Frs. Leo Traynor and Tommy Hayden.

### **Hello from Ghana SELL Resource Team**

We are filled with deep gratitude for all the love and support we have received from benefactors, allies, partners, volunteers and our community of friends even in these challenging times.. We on the Team Ghana have been conscious of how our benefactors and the wider family of SELL have been impacted by the pandemic. Most importantly we keep every one of you in our thoughts and prayers and continue to be grateful for your acts of generosity and kindness. We began our year reaching out to young people within Northern Ghana with follow up mentoring, workshop and training on the units of the SELL Programme. The Team conducted four trainings on Self Awareness, Leadership, Peace Building and Community Building, for three zones (Yendi, Damongo and Wa). One mentoring training was conducted for Wa zone, two zonal meetings were held in Tamale and Navrongo-Bolgatanga.

The team reached 956 young people in Northern Ghana. A major advocacy by the Resource Team was on the care for the earth with emphasis on the part of our vision that invite people to live at peace with the earth and all her life forms. We joined other likeminded organisations in commemorating the World Earth Day celebration which is recognized by the world on the 22nd of April of every year.

The theme for this year's celebration was "Restore Our Earth". Three forms of activities were undertaken; Awareness in Schools, Media Campaign and Clean-up Campaign. The campaign reached 1,314 young adults in Northern Ghana. Through the support of benefactors of SELL, Team Ghana began the construction of a permanent Resource Centre to be used for meetings, training etc. As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we wish you deep Peace and fulfilled Christmas and the hope of a blessed New Year! Ubuntu (We are because you are)!  
Vincent- Sell Ghana

## Message from Hagar

Hello everyone, my name is Hagar, a member of the SELL Ghana Team. I recently arrived in Ireland to study MA Sociology (Youth, Community and Social Regeneration) for a year at the University of Limerick.

As I arrived at Dublin airport, the first email I received was a daily reflection titled "We are called to behold". This reflection held so much meaning for me then and still does. The writer shared, "once we decide to behold, we are available for awe and wonder, to be present to what is, without the filter of our preferences...". With this invitation, I welcomed myself into this newness of Ireland and all that it will bring.

It has been a great experience so far. From the beautiful reflective experience I had in Tearmann in Glendalough to being in the loving presence of many wonderful people. In my Programme of study, this semester focuses significantly on social division and exclusion in society. How class, gender, race, and structures of society continues to leave people on the fringes. I have been challenged to look inward to see the many ways I have been a perpetrator of 'othering' of people. This has increased my passion for equality in society.



I behold this year and all the blessing and learnings it will come with and look forward to sharing this with SELL Ghana and all the people I may encounter. I am thankful to you all for your loving generosity. Go raibh maith agaibh: may goodness be with you always.  
Hagar

## Greetings from SELL Nigeria

SELL VOLUNTEERS HAD AN INTERACTIVE SESSION WITH THE LEADERS OF DADIN KOWA COMMUNITY.

As part of our role in building peaceful and model communities, SELL volunteers at the 2021 Annual General Reflection had an interactive session with the leaders of Dadin Kowa community in Jos, Plateau state. Dadin Kowa is a community in Jos which has not experienced any form of violence; the people in that community have embraced peace and have learned to live with one another as family, Muslims, Christians and traditional worshippers.



SELL chose Dadin kowa due to its unique nature, the Foundation invited traditional and religious leaders of Dadin Kowa community to come and share their own experiences and the strategies they adopted as a community which has helped them live together as one family, so as the SELL volunteers and other stakeholders will learn from them and to inculcate such unity in their various communities.



Speaking at the event, Alhaji Tanko, leader of the Muslim group congratulated the SELL volunteers for the good work they are doing towards peace keeping in their various communities. He added that Dadin Kowa (enjoyment for all) as the name implies is a small community but peace loving and accommodating. The leaders also acknowledged that the only thing that helped them in the community was their constant meeting with the various religious and youth leaders which have helped them proffer solutions to some of the challenges they were having or might have encountered. They encouraged SELL volunteers to adopt such strategy in their various communities for a peaceful coexistence.

Beji-SELL Nigeria

## A Word from Malawi.

In Malawi the SELL Programme will work under the auspices of a registered NGO called Ungweru which means Light. Malawi is known as 'the warm heart of Africa'. People meeting you for the first time will often say welcome to the warm heart of Africa. It's a lovely expression and in so many ways Malawi lives up to this nickname. Warm climate, warm welcoming people, and a huge warm natural lake that runs along a lot of the eastern part of the country.

I am living in Mzuzu which is situated on a plateau in the north of the country. Being high up its got a very temperate climate being cool for a lot of the year. Malawi feels like an easy country to live in with welcoming people and overall a pleasant climate. But, isn't there always a but, sadly there are huge levels of poverty here. I am still trying to understand why this is so. There is a lot of fertile land, it may be that being a land locked country makes importing goods difficult and expensive. Why the government imposes such large import duty on items is a mystery to me.

At present I'm attempting to learn the Tumbuka language, but with time I hope to improve. Since my arrival a lot of my time and energy has been spent on building a residence to live in and a resource room big enough to run the SELL programme. Approximately €50,000 spent has been contributed by you all.

By Feb / March I hope to have recruited two young folk who will work with Fr. Tommy and I. Tommy hopes to reach here in the springtime of next year. From then we will launch the SELL Programme proper, and we will be letting you know how we get on. Meanwhile continue to pray that the Lord guides our efforts. **Fr. Leo**



Constructing our building in Malawi



Fr. Leo with some of the Ungweru Team.

## Message to SELL Supporters

Just as we thought we were navigating fairly successfully through a decisive phase of the COVID-19 Pandemic and beginning to see some light at the end of the tunnel we are now staring into another crisis. The situation in Europe in late November 2021 (as I write) is very challenging to say the least.

We have just come through COP26 and to put it mildly for most people it has been rather "underwhelming". While the analysis of Greta Thunberg may seem overly harsh she is probably articulating something very true. There is still too much blah blah blah and not enough action. We are not putting our money where our mouth is.

I firmly believe that the SELL Programme is ideally placed to help make people more aware of the precarious position in which we find ourselves today. The SELL Programme helps us to analyse what is going on in today's world and gives us a framework for constructing a society which is guided by a different narrative. What is most needed in our world today is solidarity; a greater sense that we are all in this great enterprise together.

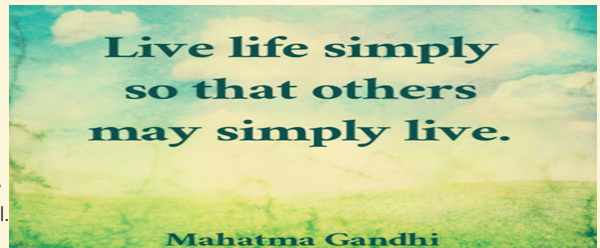
Each of us has to see how she/he can live a more simple life which is ecologically sustainable. In the words of the great Mahatma Gandhi we are all called "to live simply so that others may simply live". We have to find ways to live happy and fulfilled lives without amassing more than our fair share of the world's resources.

It has been an exciting year for SELL as it expands its outreach and begins a community in Mzuzu, Malawi. We wish Leo Traynor and the team every success and blessing as they bring the SELL programme to another country. I have no doubt but that the Programme will enrich the lives of many Malawians.

I am also certain that the Malawian people who engage with the SELL Programme will enrich it and will help make it become an even more effective instrument in the creation of a more just, inclusive, fair and equitable world. Our sincere thanks to all who have contributed to the SELL Programme in 2021. We wish you a very happy Christmas and every blessing in 2022.  
Fr Tomas O'Connor SPS

## Learning to Grow

When we learn, we grow. We can see it in children when they master the skill of tying their shoelaces or riding a bike, they appear to grow a few inches with the confidence they gain. When they first jab lift or toe-tap, slam-dunk, plie, or turn out their feet, their smiles are a little bit wider, eyes brighter and they walk tall. First words or tentative steps from the child never expected to flourish, challenge our limiting beliefs and renew our belief in the miracle of human endeavour and the power of love. Ben Phillips, author of 'How to Fight Inequality' challenges us to see how offering others opportunity is ultimately a gain for all of us: "None of us are self-made, and too many people never get the chance to be all they can - from which we all miss out. When we enable everyone to flourish, how much we will all gain".  
Orla McCullagh



## Note from the Editors

Once again thanks to the many people that are supporting us financially. The response to our request for contributions of a £5 minimum, monthly, paid by Standing Order, has been great. If you would like to help us, please contact one of the people listed below. We are grateful to St. Patricks Missionary Society (SPMS) for their support of Fathers Leo and Tommy.

If you would like to get more information about SELL, make a contribution, or if you would like to receive our newsletter by email, please contact:

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